

# THE CHATTERBOX

**“Jesus Didn’t Reject People, and Neither Do We”**



**APRIL 2016**

## **CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF OUR CHURCH HISTORY**

Groton Community

Church will be celebrating its fiftieth year in the fall of 2016. This is an extremely important event for us to celebrate. Chris Brown has come up with a wonderful idea: A 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Cookbook. Some of the other ideas which have been suggested include;

A special worship service on the Sunday closest to the actual date of the event.

- A choral concert by several choirs of nearby churches either combined with a worship service or as a stand-alone event.
- An open house with light refreshments.
- A weekend program with a person familiar with the church architecture and also someone to talk on the stained glass windows.
- A program on the history of the three churches and an explanation of the merger of the churches.
- A program where as many as possible of the present pastor and former pastors are invited to share their recollections while ministering at the church.
- A public dinner.

- A pot-luck supper for the congregation to share old favorite recipes (perhaps from the new cookbook.)
- A program with speakers who remember village life at the time the combined congregation was formed.
- A program with presentations on our church as well as other local churches.
- Making a commemorative mug featuring our church which could be sold as a fundraiser.
- Janet Watkins of Brittany Station has suggested creating a decorative Christmas Ornament featuring our church which could also be sold as a fundraiser.

## **THE PASTOR’S NOTES**

### **Humor . . . In the Church?**

By the time you read this article, April 1<sup>st</sup>—April Fools’ Day—will have come and gone. By and large, the modern American church, and certainly, we here at Groton Community Church, have tended to ignore this holiday, April Fools’ Day—if it is a holiday at all—because, well, it is not serious, and besides, many of us believe that the church is no place for frivolity.

But actually, one of the antecedents of April Fools Day was the Feast of Fools, a popular religious festival, held on or about January 1, in France and England, during the Middle Ages. Participants in the Feast of Fools reversed all customary rules of proper church behavior.

Normally, the bishops and priests who ran the church were very straight-faced, strict, and proper—but during Feast of Fools, instead of presiding over religious services with dignity, seriousness, and reverence, they allowed participants to bring the coarse, irreverent behavior of the carnival into church. Usually, a mock bishop or mock pope was elected, ecclesiastical ritual was parodied, and low and high officials changed places. After their wild mass, people often roamed the streets in an equally wild, mock religious procession. Such festivals were probably a Christian adaptation of the pagan festivities of the Saturnalia.

By the 13th century, these feasts had become a burlesque of Christian morality and worship. In many places a Lord of Misrule ruled over the revels. The ceremonies were under the charge of the Boy-Bishop, a young man fitted out as a high clergyman. During the feast, lower clergymen and minor officials parodied the sacred rites and customs of the Church. A similar burlesque, the Feast of the Ass, celebrating the donkey on which Mary and the Child Jesus rode, was widespread in France. In spite of repeated prohibitions and penalties imposed by the Council of Basel in 1431, the feasts did not die out entirely until the 16th century.

You and I may see nothing at all redeeming about such tomfoolery—indeed, we may feel that it made a mockery out of the sacred. Yet the annual Feast of Fools festival was a kind of relief valve for the common people of the parish—who, after all, did not have easy lives. In addition, it rightly deflated the pomposity of the clergy.

I say all this not to praise Feast of Fools celebrations—they were wild and excessive—but to say something about the legitimate place of laughter, both in life and in the church. Many of us Christians seem to feel that humor is completely irrelevant to our faith, and to the church's worship and teaching. You would think we were baptized in pickle juice!

However, I think that we need to recognize the important, but often overlooked, sacred gifts of laughter and joy!

Laughter is a gift that allows us to keep our hearts light, even at the most difficult of times. At a funeral, a funny story about a loved one can bring comfort to those grieving. During a worship service, the gospel can often be more effectively shared with humor and joy. And even in the midst of the observing the crucifixion of Jesus, we know that Life will have the last laugh over Death.

For centuries, in Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant countries, Easter Monday and “Bright Sunday” (the Sunday after Easter) were observed by the faithful as “days of joy and laughter” with parties and picnics to celebrate Jesus’ resurrection.

Parishioners and pastors played practical jokes on each other, drenched each other with water, sang, and danced. It was a time for clergy and people to tell jokes and to have fun.

The custom of Easter Monday and Bright Sunday celebrations, as the early Greek Christians called them, were rooted in the musings of early church theologians (like Augustine, Gregory of Nyssa, and John Chrysostom) that God played a practical joke on the devil by raising Jesus from the dead. Easter was “God’s supreme joke played on death.

In 1988, observing that the celebration of Jesus’ resurrection has been sorely neglected by 20th-century Christianity, the Fellowship of Merry Christians began encouraging member churches and prayer groups to resurrect the old Christian custom of Easter Monday or “Bright Sunday” celebrations.

At a time when Jesus’ resurrection has been subjected to an onslaught of ridicule and disbelief, the Fellowship sought to shore up belief through ongoing resurrection celebrations.

Some say that the Bible, Sunday morning worship, and our Christian faith are all very

serious things—and we should not trivialize them by telling jokes. And I agree. The Bible is indeed a very serious voice in our faith. It carries with it much wisdom, teaching and is heralded as the very word of God.

However, the Bible is also a reflection of human life. It celebrates the sorrows, the challenges and the joys that come with living—the happiness and the laughter—that comes from a life knowing and serving God.

I believe that God created humor and laughter. I believe that God knew that without humor and laughter and joy, the tragedies and the difficulties of life would quickly wear us down. God also knew that some ministers (myself included!) could take themselves much too seriously, and even become pompous. A good dose of humor can help deflate some of our ostentation and airs.

Laughter and even foolishness are mentioned in several places in the Scriptures. The first evidence of human laughter is the biblical story of Abraham and Sarah who at an old age were promised by God to become the ancestors of great nations: □ “God said to Abraham, “As for Sar’ai your wife, you shall not call her Sar’ai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. She shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.” Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed , and said to himself, “Can a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Can Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child” (Genesis 17:15)?

And in the Gospel of Luke's record of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus includes the gift of laughter in his beatitudes and blessings: □ “Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh” (Luke 6:21).

And then St. Paul tells us this in 1 Corinthians, Chapter 1: “For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength” (1 Corinthians 1:25).

Blessings to you and yours—and do take a moment to share a laugh with someone you love, or with a friend!

Pastor Chris

## **BOARD OF DEACONS WORSHIP LEADER POSITIONS**

### **WORSHIP SERVICE PARTICIPATION**

The Board of Deacons is hopeful that people will enjoy helping out in various leadership roles on Sunday mornings. If for any reason the schedule provided presents a hardship or any discomfort, please attempt to find a person to fill in for you or speak with Carole Daugherty. It is the desire of the Board of Deacons to make our congregation an inclusive community by involving as many members of the congregation as possible in leadership roles on Sunday mornings. If there is something that you would enjoy doing on Sunday morning please let Carole know. Thank you for your willingness to participate.

#### **April 3:**

Announce: Anita Kirby  
Scripture: Richard Sangersland  
Ushers: Jack and Dorothy Van Cise  
Greeters: Sharon Gallow & Barb Exton  
Refreshments: Daugherty

#### **April 10:**

Announce: Barbara Exton  
Scripture: Sue Parris  
Ushers: Lucy & Jon Dates  
Greeters: Katherine Crockanberg/Richard Sangersland  
Refreshments: Satterly/Watrous

#### **April 17:**

Announce: Frank Satterly  
Scripture: Tammy Buck  
Ushers: Gary & Kathy Watrous  
Greeters: Rebecca & Nick Gamel  
Refreshments: Van Cise

## April 24:

Announce: Wallace Holmes  
Scripture: Linda Mizer  
Ushers: Terry Ofner & John Hoster  
Greeters: Jim Snowberger/Robin & Eric  
Ridley

Refreshments: Gallow

## SCHEDULE OF WEEKLY EVENTS

### SUNDAY

Worship Service 9:30a.m.  
Sunday School During the Service  
Refreshments and Conversation 10:30a.m.

### MONDAY, WEDNESDAY, SATURDAY:

AA In Lower Hall 7 p.m.

### TUESDAY.

Book Study (on Google Hangouts) 6 a.m.

### THURSDAY.:

TOPS 5:30 p.

## FROM THE LOFT

As I was searching for Lenten and Easter hymns on my new tablet (that sings back to me), I was reminded of the hymn by Ken Bible based on the following passage:

*...let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*

(Hebrews 12:1-3, NASB)

**Refrain: For the joy, for the joy,  
For His love, to His glory,  
For His death, for His life,  
For today and forever.  
Follow on, follow on for the joy!**

As we contemplate Jesus' sacrifice for us, remember that God's love is for us, and we can express the joy that it gives. As Jesus was explaining before his death, (John 15:11) *These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and your joy may be made full.*

Since the choir members wanted to sing favorites before the service, I made large print Lent/Easter song packets to use during this season, and then we can keep them from Sunday to Sunday and not make multiple copies each time. If you would like to lead favorites before the service, please let me know.

If you need some more Easter music, on April 28<sup>th</sup>, the SUNY Cortland Choral Union will present the Faure *Requiem* and the Bach *Easter Cantata*, and a premier piece. As we were rehearsing the German last night, one of our members from Germany explained to us that the translation didn't do "the grave" justice. The German word really talks about it as God's joke. What better way to defeat the enemy but to raise someone from the dead and leave the tomb empty?

Because of the resurrection, we have hope for our eternity.

Express your joy,  
Valorie

## MISSION BOARD

I am happy to report that the **One Great Hour of Sharing** collection amounted to \$339. When disasters happen anywhere in the world, the UCC is ready with financial help due to this offering.

We have only a couple of weeks until the **Hygiene and School kits** are due - April 17 - so I hope you are working on them. The Rotary Club has a large number of school kits that they are donating to help us and I have a couple of hygiene kits from local people. These kits are warehoused to be ready to be given

To victims of floods, fires, earthquakes, any disaster you can think of and also to the volunteers who help the victims.

Can you imagine what a bar of soap, a towel and a washcloth would mean to you if all of a sudden you found yourself displaced from your home? Can you imagine how badly children feel who are deprived of pencils and papers and can't go to school.

This mission project is one where we can do so much at small cost to ourselves. The kits can be put together for \$20 or less. We are asking for \$2.00 for postage for each kit. If you don't do a kit, could you donate something toward postage?

Looking forward to May, Mother's Day is May 8 and that is traditionally the day set aside for the **Blanket and Tools** collection. For \$5.00 you can purchase a blanket that can be used for warmth, shelter or carrying possessions. For \$5.00 you can help purchase tools that can help a family or even a community to become self-sufficient. A small amount to ask that can do so much.

Our job as a Mission Board is to ask your help, mostly financial, so that we can do our part in contributing to all the various projects and collections throughout the year. You have always responded and that makes our job easier.

Don't forget to support the local **Food Pantry** with non-perishable foods or money.

Barb Exton for the Mission Board

## COOKBOOK

This year in October the Groton Community Church will be celebrating 50 years of the Baptist, Congregational, and Methodist churches coming together. One of the things to celebrate this occasion we will be putting together a COOKBOOK. The recipes will be from people who have been part of the church for the past 50 years. We invite people who

came from the 3 churches or people who in general have attended the Groton Community Church to send us 1 or 2 of your favorite recipes. Perhaps if you are a family member of someone who has passed away that was part of the 50 years you could send a recipe or 2 of their specialty with their name on it. Once you've chosen your recipe(s) and checked them over please send to Chris Brown at either 120 Old Peruville Rd., Groton, NY 13073 or e-mail at [browns1992@a-znet.com](mailto:browns1992@a-znet.com). If you have any questions you can contact me at 898-4612.

Thanks, Chris

## Trustees

If you have trouble hearing some of the things during the church service we'd like to remind everyone we have hearing devices in the back for your use. On May 14th from 9-12 we will be having our Spring clean-up day. We hope everyone who can will come to help. Also a reminder to everyone since the secretary position is such a part time position, her only job is to type the bulletin. Our spring flower sale was a success, 105 flowers sold. And remember if your away please keep up your pledge, the church depends on it.

Tom Brown, Chair

The Chatterbox is made possible by a generous bequest from the late McLean Dameron in memory of his beloved wife, Martha.

Office hours for Groton Community Church are on Friday from 10-23 am and 1-3 pm. If you have questions or require further information, please contact the church at 607-898-3100.

Groton Community Church is completely handicapped accessible and utilizes large print bulletins and hearing aids.

## EVENTS IN APRIL 2016

- 2 Ham/Meatloaf Dinner 4:30 pm
- 3 Communion Sunday 9:30 am
- 4 Futuring Group 6:00 pm
- 11 Board of Trustees 6:00 pm
- 12 Board of Deacons 6:00 pm
- 18 Church Council 6:00 pm
- 21 Communion Services
  - 2:30 Center Village Court
  - 3:30 Nursing Home
- 28 SUNY Cortland Choral Union Concert



### Church Officiary:

Chris Xenakis, Pastor, 607-343-3389  
Terry Ofner, Chatterbox Editor  
Jeannette Keller, Administrative Assistant

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